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The Builders and other Poems

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THE BUILDERS AND OTHER POEMS

THE BUILDERS AND OTHER POEMS BY HENRY VAN DYKE

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New York MDCCCXCVII

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SONGS OUT OF DOORS

WINGS OF A DOVE

I

AT sunset, when the rosy light was dying
Far down the pathway of the west,
I saw a lonely dove in silence flying,
To be at rest.

Pilgrim of air, I cried, could I but borrow
Thy wandering wings, thy freedom blest,
I 'd fly away from every careful sorrow,
And find my rest.

II

But when the dusk a filmy veil was weaving,
Back came the dove to seek her nest
Deep in the forest where her mate was grieving,—
There was true rest.

Peace, heart of mine! no longer sigh to wander;
Lose not thy life in fruitless quest.
There are no happy islands over yonder;
Come home and rest.

THE PARTING AND THE COMING GUEST

WHO watched the worn-out Winter die?
Who, peering through the dripping pane
At nightfall, under sleet and rain,
Saw the old graybeard totter by?
Who listened to his parting sigh,
The sobbings of his feeble breath,
His whispered colloquy with Death,
And when his all of life was done
Stood near to bid a last good-bye?
Of all his former friends not one
Saw the forsaken Winter die.

Who welcomed in the maiden Spring?
Who heard her footfalls, swift and light
As fairies stepping through the night;
Or guessed what happy dawn would bring
The first flash of her blue-bird's wing,
The first sight of her mayflower-face
To brighten every shady place?
One morning, down the village street,
"Oh, here am I," we heard her sing, —
And none had been awake to greet
The coming of the maiden Spring.

But look, her violet eyes are wet
  With bright, unfallen, dewy tears;
  And in her song my fancy hears
A note of sorrow trembling yet.
Perhaps, outside the town, she met
  Old Winter as he limped away
  To die forlorn, and let him lay
  His weary head upon her knee
And rest awhile, and felt regret
  For one so gray and friendless, — see,
Her tender eyes with tears are wet.

And so, by night, while we were all at rest,
I think the coming sped the parting guest.

AN ANGLER'S WISH

I

WHEN tulips bloom in Union Square,
And timid breaths of vernal air
Go wandering down the dusty town,
Like children lost in Vanity Fair;

When every long, unlovely row
Of westward houses stands aglow,
And leads the eyes toward sunset skies
Beyond the hills where green trees grow;

Then weary seems the street parade,
And weary books, and weary trade:
I 'm only wishing to go a-fishing;
For this the month of May was made.

II

I guess the pussy-willows now
  Are creeping out on every bough
  Along the brook; and robins look
For early worms behind the plough.

The thistle-birds have changed their dun,
For yellow coats, to match the sun;
  And in the same array of flame
The Dandelion Show 's begun.

The flocks of young anemones
Are dancing round the budding trees:
  Who can help wishing to go a-fishing
In days as full of joy as these?

III

I think the meadow-lark's clear sound
Leaks upward slowly from the ground,
  While on the wing, the bluebirds ring
Their wedding-bells to woods around.

The flirting chewink calls his dear
Behind the bush; and very near,
  Where water flows, where green grass grows,
Song-sparrows gently sing, "Good cheer."

And, best of all, through twilight's calm
The hermit-thrush repeats his psalm.
  How much I 'm wishing to go a-fishing
In days so sweet with music's balm!

IV

'T is not a proud desire of mine;
I ask for nothing superfine;
  No heavy weight, no salmon great,
To break the record, or my line:

Only an idle little stream,
Whose amber waters softly gleam,
  Where I may wade, through woodland shade,
And cast the fly, and loaf, and dream:

Only a trout or two, to dart
From foaming pools, and try my art:
  No more I'm wishing—old-fashioned fishing,
And just a day on Nature's heart.

THE AFTER-ECHO

NOW the long echoes die away
Along the shores of silence, as a wave,
Retreating, circles down the sand;
And one by one, with sweet delay,
The mellow sounds that cliff and island gave,
Have lingered in the crescent bay,
Until, by lightest breezes fanned,
They float far off into the dying day,
And all is still as death.
But listen! hark,—
A slender, wavering breath
Comes from the border of the dark;
A note as clear and slow
As falls from some enchanted bell,
Or spirit, passing from the world below,
That whispers back, Farewell.

So in the heart,
When, fading slowly down the past,
Fond memories depart,
And each that leaves it seems the last;
Long after all the rest are flown,
Comes back a well-remembered tone,—
The after-echo of departed years,
And touches all the soul to tears.

MATINS

FLOWERS, when the night is done,
Lift their heads to greet the sun;
Sweetest looks and odours raise,
In a silent hymn of praise.

So my heart would turn away
From the darkness to the day;
Lying open, in God's sight,
As a flower in the light.

THE FALL OF THE LEAVES

I

IN warlike pomp, with banners streaming,
The regiments of autumn stood:
I saw their gold and scarlet gleaming
From every hill-side, every wood.

Beside the sea the clouds were keeping
Their secret leaguer, gray and still;
And soon their misty scouts came creeping,
With noiseless step, from hill to hill.

All day their sullen armies drifted
Athwart the sky with slanting rain;
At sunset for a space they lifted,
With dusk they settled down again.

II

At dark the winds began to blow
With mutterings distant, low;
From sea and sky they called their strength,
Till with an angry, broken roar,
Like billows on an unseen shore,
Their fury burst at length.

I heard through the night
The rush and the clamor;
The pulse of the fight
Like blows of Thor's hammer;
The pattering flight
Of the leaves, and the anguished
Moans of the forest vanquished.

Just at daybreak came a gusty song:
"Shout! the winds are strong.
The little people of the leaves are fled.
Shout! The Autumn is dead!"

III

The storm is ended: the impartial sun
Laughs down upon the victory lost and won.
In long, triumphant lines the cloudy host
Roll through the sky, retreating to the coast.

But we, fond lovers of the forest shade,
And grateful friends of every fallen leaf,
Forget the glories of the cloud-parade,
And walk the ruined woods in quiet grief.

For so these thoughtful hearts of ours repeat,
On fields of triumph, dirges of defeat;
And still we turn, on gala-days, to tread
Among the rustling memories of the dead.

A SNOW-SONG

DOES the snow fall at sea?
Yes, when the north winds blow,
When the wild clouds fly low,
Out of each gloomy wing,
Hissing and murmuring,
Into the stormy sea
Falleth the snow.

Does the snow hide the sea?
On all its tossing plains
Never a flake remains;
Drift never resteth there;
Vanishing everywhere,
Into the hungry sea
Falleth the snow.

What means the snow at sea?
Whirled in the veering blast,
Thickly the flakes drive past;
Each like a childish ghost
Wavers, and then is lost.
Type of life's mystery,
In the forgetful sea
Fadeth the snow.

IF ALL THE SKIES

IF all the skies were sunshine,
  Our faces would be fain
To feel once more upon them
  The cooling plash of rain.

If all the world were music,
  Our hearts would often long
For one sweet strain of silence,
  To break the endless song.

If life were always merry,
  Our souls would seek relief,
And rest from weary laughter
  In the quiet arms of grief.

ON THE GLACIER

THE dawn in silence reigns supreme:
No sound the frozen stillness breaks,
Save when the avalanche awakes
The echoes, dull as in a dream:
Their hollow thunders, dying, seem
To leave the air so still it aches.
At noon, unnumbered rivulets spring
To life; and down the crystal walls
Each brook makes music as it falls,
Till all the blue crevasses ring.
So in the poet's heart the glow
Of love unbinds the streams that sleep;
A thousand rills of feeling leap
To freedom, singing as they flow.

ALPINE SOLITUDE

WHITE death bespread the solemn plain,
And crowned the circling peaks with dread;
The sun was glaring overhead,
So fierce, the sky was full of pain.
And while I longed and looked in vain
For any trace of life, I said,
"No foot but mine has dared to tread
This solitude — none shall again."
But as I spoke, before my feet
I saw a track across the snow, —
Some wandering chamois, hours ago,
Had passed here on his journey fleet, —
A message from a friend unknown,
It left my heart no more alone.

ROSLIN AND HAWTHORNDEN

FAIR Roslin Chapel, how divine
The art that reared thy costly shrine!
Thy carven columns must have grown
By magic, like a dream in stone.

Yet not within thy storied wall
Would I in adoration fall,
So gladly as within the glen
That leads to lovely Hawthornden.

A long-drawn aisle, with roof of green
And vine-clad pillars, while between,
The Esk runs murmuring on its way,
In living music, night and day.

Within the temple of this wood
The martyrs of the covenant stood,
And rolled the psalm, and poured the prayer,
From Nature's solemn altar-stair.

FOUR BIRDS

AND A FLOWER

THE SONG-SPARROW

THERE is a bird I know so well,
It seems as if he must have sung
Beside my crib when I was young;
Before I knew the way to spell
The name of even the smallest bird,
His gentle-joyful song I heard.
Now see if you can tell, my dear,
What bird it is that, every year,
Sings *"Sweet—sweet—sweet—very merry cheer."*

He comes in March, when winds are strong,
And snow returns to hide the earth;
But still he warms his heart with mirth,
And waits for May. He lingers long
While flowers fade; and every day
Repeats his small, contented lay;
As if to say, we need not fear
The season's change, if love is here
With *"Sweet—sweet—sweet—very merry cheer."*

He does not wear a Joseph's-coat
Of many colours, smart and gay;
His suit is Quaker brown and gray,
With darker patches at his throat.
And yet of all the well-dressed throng
Not one can sing so brave a song.
It makes the pride of looks appear
A vain and foolish thing, to hear
His *"Sweet—sweet—sweet—very merry cheer."*

A lofty place he does not love,
  But sits by choice, and well at ease,
  In hedges, and in little trees
That stretch their slender arms above
  The meadow-brook; and there he sings
  Till all the field with pleasure rings;
And so he tells in every ear,
That lowly homes to heaven are near
In *"Sweet — sweet — sweet — very merry cheer."*

I like the tune, I like the words;
  They seem so true, so free from art,
  So friendly, and so full of heart,
That if but one of all the birds
  Could be my comrade everywhere,
  My little brother of the air,
This is the one I'd choose, my dear,
Because he'd bless me, every year,
With *"Sweet — sweet — sweet — very merry cheer."*

THE MARYLAND YELLOW-THROAT

WHILE May bedecks the naked trees
With tassels and embroideries,
And many blue-eyed violets beam
Along the edges of the stream,
I hear a voice that seems to say,
Now near at hand, now far away,
"Witchery — witchery — witchery."

An incantation so serene,
So innocent, befits the scene:
There's magic in that small bird's note—
See, there he flits — the Yellow-throat;
A living sunbeam, tipped with wings,
A spark of light that shines and sings
"Witchery — witchery — witchery."

You prophet with a pleasant name,
If out of Mary-land you came,
You know the way that thither goes
Where Mary's lovely garden grows:
Fly swiftly back to her, I pray,
And try, to call her down this way,
"Witchery — witchery — witchery!"

Tell her to leave her cockle-shells,
And all her little silver bells
That blossom into melody,
And all her maids less fair than she.
She does not need these pretty things,
For everywhere she comes, she brings
"Witchery — witchery — witchery!"

The woods are greening overhead,
And flowers adorn each mossy bed;
The waters babble as they run —
One thing is lacking, only one:
If Mary were but here to-day,
I would believe your charming lay,
"Witchery — witchery — witchery!"

Along the shady road I look —
Who 's coming now across the brook?
A woodland maid, all robed in white —
The leaves dance round her with delight,
The stream laughs out beneath her feet —
Sing, merry bird, the charm 's complete,
"Witchery — witchery — witchery!"

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL

DO you remember, father,—
It seems so long ago,—
The day we fished together
Along the Pocono?
At dusk I waited for you,
Beside the lumber-mill,
And there I heard a hidden bird
That chanted, "whip-poor-will,"
"Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!"
Sad and shrill,—*"whippoorwill!"*

The place was all deserted;
The mill-wheel hung at rest;
The lonely star of evening
Was quivering in the west;
The veil of night was falling;
The winds were folded still;
And everywhere the trembling air
Re-echoed "whip-poor-will!"
"Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!"
Sad and shrill,—*"whippoorwill!"*

You seemed so long in coming,
I felt so much alone;
The wide, dark world was round me,
And life was all unknown;
The hand of sorrow touched me,
And made my senses thrill
With all the pain that haunts the strain
Of mournful whip-poor-will.
"Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!"
Sad and shrill,—*"whippoorwill!"*

What did I know of trouble?
An idle little lad;
I had not learned the lessons
That make men wise and sad.
I dreamed of grief and parting,
And something seemed to fill
My heart with tears, while in my ears
Resounded "whip-poor-will."
"Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!"
Sad and shrill, — *"whippoorwill!"*

'T was but a shadowy sadness,
That lightly passed away;
But I have known the substance
Of sorrow, since that day.
For nevermore at twilight,
Beside the silent mill,
I 'll wait for you, in the falling dew,
And hear the whip-poor-will.
"Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!"
Sad and shrill, — *"whippoorwill!"*

But if you still remember,
In that fair land of light,
The pains and fears that touch us
Along this edge of night,
I think all earthly grieving,
And all our mortal ill,
To you must seem like a boy's sad dream,
Who hears the whip-poor-will.
"Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!"
A passing thrill, — *"whippoorwill!"*

THE VEERY

THE moonbeams over Arno's vale in silver flood were pouring,
When first I heard the nightingale a long-lost love deploring.
So passionate, so full of pain, it sounded strange and eerie;
I longed to hear a simpler strain,—the wood-notes of the veery.

The laverock sings a bonny lay above the Scottish heather;
It sprinkles down from far away like light and love together;
He drops the golden notes to greet his brooding mate, his dearie;
I only know one song more sweet,—the vespers of the veery.

In English gardens, green and bright and full of fruity treasure,
I heard the blackbird with delight repeat his merry measure:
The ballad was a pleasant one, the tune was loud and cheery,
And yet, with every setting sun, I listened for the veery.

But far away, and far away, the tawny thrush
is singing;
New England woods, at close of day, with that
clear chant are ringing:
And when my light of life is low, and heart and
flesh are weary,
I fain would hear, before I go, the wood notes
of the veery.

THE LILY OF YORROW

DEEP in the heart of the forest the lily of
Yorrow is growing;
Blue is its cup as the sky, and with mystical
odour o'erflowing;
Faintly it falls through the shadowy glades
when the south wind is blowing.

Sweet are the primroses pale and the violets
after a shower;
Sweet are the borders of pinks and the blossom-
ing grapes on the bower;
Sweeter by far is the breath of that far-away
woodland flower.

Searching and strange in its sweetness, it steals
like a perfume enchanted
Under the arch of the forest, and all who per-
ceive it are haunted,
Seeking and seeking forever, till sight of the
lily is granted.

Who can describe how it grows, with its chalice
of lazuli leaning
Over a crystalline spring, where the ferns and
the mosses are greening?
Who can imagine its beauty, or utter the depth
of its meaning?

Calm of the journeying stars, and repose of the mountains olden,
Joy of the swift-running rivers, and glory of sunsets golden,
Secrets that cannot be told in the heart of the flower are holden.

Surely to see it is peace and the crown of a life-long endeavour;
Surely to pluck it is gladness, — but they who have found it can never
Tell of the gladness and peace: they are hid from our vision forever.

'T was but a moment ago that a comrade was wandering near me:
Turning aside from the pathway he murmured a greeting to cheer me, —
Then he was lost in the shade, and I called but he did not hear me.

Why should I dream he is dead, and bewail him with passionate sorrow?
Surely I know there is gladness in finding the lily of Yorrow:
He has discovered it first, and perhaps I shall find it to-morrow.

LYRICS

OF

FRIENDSHIP AND FAITH

TENNYSON

In lucem transitus
October, 1892

FROM the misty shores of midnight, touched
with splendours of the moon,
To the singing tides of heaven, and the light
more clear than noon,
Passed a soul that grew to music till it was
with God in tune.

Brother of the greatest poets, true to nature,
true to art;
Lover of Immortal Love, uplifter of the human
heart;
Who shall cheer us with high music, who shall
sing, if thou depart?

Silence here — for love is silent, gazing on the
lessening sail;
Silence here — for grief is voiceless when the
mighty minstrels fail;
Silence here — but far beyond us, many voices
crying, Hail!

A BALLAD OF CLAREMONT HILL

THE roar of the city is low,
Muffled by new-fallen snow,
And the sign of the wintry moon is small and round and still.
Will you come with me to-night,
To see a pleasant sight
Away on the river-side, at the edge of Claremont Hill?

"And what shall we see there,
But streets that are new and bare,
And many a desolate place that the city is coming to fill;
And a soldier's tomb of stone,
And a few trees standing alone—
Will you walk for that through the cold, to the edge of Claremont Hill?"

But there's more than that for me,
In the place that I fain would see:
There's a glimpse of the grace that helps us all to bear life's ill;
A touch of the vital breath
That keeps the world from death;
A flower that never fades, on the edge of Claremont Hill.

For just where the road swings round,
In a narrow strip of ground,
Where a group of forest trees are lingering fondly still,
There 's a grave of the olden time,
When the garden bloomed in its prime,
And the children laughed and sang on the edge of Claremont Hill.

The marble is pure and white,
And even in this dim light,
You may read the simple words that are written there if you will;
You may hear a father tell
Of the child he loved so well,
A hundred years ago, on the edge of Claremont Hill.

The tide of the city has rolled
Across that bower of old,
And blotted out the beds of the rose and the daffodil;
But the little playmate sleeps,
And the shrine of love still keeps
A record of happy days, on the edge of Claremont Hill.

The river is pouring down
To the crowded, careless town,
Where the intricate wheels of trade are grinding on like a mill;
But the clamorous noise and strife
Of the hurrying waves of life
Flow soft by this haven of peace on the edge of Claremont Hill.

And after all, my friend,
When the tale of our years shall end,
Be it long or short, or lowly or great, as God may will,
What better praise could we hear,
Than this of the child so dear:
You have made my life more sweet, on the edge of Claremont Hill?

FOUR THINGS

FOUR things a man must learn to do
If he would make his record true:
To think without confusion clearly;
To love his fellow-men sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely;
To trust in God and Heaven securely.

THE RENDEZVOUS

I COUNT that friendship little worth
  Which has not many things untold,
  Great longings that no words can hold,
And passion-secrets waiting birth.

Along the slender wires of speech
  Some message from the heart is sent;
  But who can tell the whole that's meant?
Our dearest thoughts are out of reach.

I have not seen thee, though mine eyes
  Hold now the image of thy face;
  In vain, through form, I strive to trace
The soul I love: that deeper lies.

A thousand accidents control
  Our meeting here. Clasp hand in hand,
  And swear to meet me in that land
Where friends hold converse soul to soul.

TRANSFORMATION

ONLY a little shrivelled seed,
It might be flower, or grass, or weed;
Only a box of earth on the edge
Of a narrow, dusty window-ledge;
Only a few scant summer showers;
Only a few clear shining hours;
That was all. Yet God could make
Out of these, for a sick child's sake,
A blossom-wonder, as fair and sweet
As ever broke at an angel's feet.

Only a life of barren pain,
Wet with sorrowful tears for rain,
Warmed sometimes by a wandering gleam
Of joy, that seemed but a happy dream;
A life as common and brown and bare
As the box of earth in the window there;
Yet it bore, at last, the precious bloom
Of a perfect soul in that narrow room;
Pure as the snowy leaves that fold
Over the flower's heart of gold.

(1875.)

TO MY LADY GRAYGOWN: WITH A HANDFUL OF VERSES

WAYSIDE songs and meadow blossoms; nothing perfect, nothing rare;
Every poet's ordered garden yields a hundred flowers more fair;
Master-singers know a music richer far beyond compare.

Yet the reaper in the harvest, 'mid the burden and the heat,
Hums a half-remembered ballad, finds the easy cadence sweet, —
Sees the very blue of heaven in the corn-bloom at his feet.

For the Over-Lord is generous, no straight walls His love confine;
Unto few, for world-wide glory, comes the symphony divine;
Unto all, for simple pleasure, come the thoughts that sing and shine.

So to you, dear heart, I bring them: you, among the busy throng,
Walk beside me, help me, cheer me, keep the days from seeming long:
All the blossoms, all the ballads, touched by you, to you belong —
You, my flower; you, my song!

"RAPPELLE-TOI"

REMEMBER, when the timid light
Through the enchanted halls of dawn is streaming;
Remember, when the pensive night
Beneath her silvery veil walks dreaming;
When pleasure calls thee and thy heart beats high,
When tender joys through evening shades draw nigh,
Hark, from the woodland deeps
A gentle whisper creeps,
Remember!

Remember, when the hand of fate
My life from thine forevermore has parted;
When sorrow, exile, and the weight
Of lonely years have made me heavy-hearted;
Think of my loyal love, my last adieu;
Absence and time are naught, if we are true;
Long as my heart shall beat,
To thine it will repeat,
Remember!

Remember, when the cool, dark tomb
Receives my heart into its quiet keeping,
And some sweet flower begins to bloom
Above the place where I am sleeping;
Ah then, my face thou nevermore shalt see,
But still my soul will linger close to thee,
And in the holy place of night,
The litany of love recite,—
Remember!

From the French.

"DU BIST WIE EINE BLUME"

FAIR art thou as a flower
And innocent and shy:
I look on thee and sorrow;
I grieve, I know not why.

I long to lay, in blessing,
My hand upon thy brow,
And pray that God may keep thee
As fair and pure as now.

From the German of Heinrich Heine.

"EIN FICHTENBAUM STEHT EINSAM"

A FIR-TREE standeth lonely
On an icy northern height,
Asleep, while snow-storms cover
His rest with robes of white.

Dreaming, he sees a palm-tree
In the distant morning-land;
She stands alone and silent
In the burning waste of sand.

From the German of Heinrich Heine.

"IN MEMORIAM"

THE record of a faith sublime,
  And hope, through clouds, far-off discerned;
  The incense of a love that burned
Through pain and doubt defying Time:

A light that gleamed across the wave
  Of darkness, down the rolling years,
  Piercing the heavy mist of tears—
A rainbow shining o'er the grave:

The story of a soul at strife
  That learned at last to kiss the rod,
  And passed through sorrow up to God,
From living to a higher life.

INSCRIPTION FOR THE WINDOW OF KATRINA'S TOWER AT "YADDO"

THIS is the window's message,
In silence, to the Queen:
"Thou hast a double kingdom
And I am set between:
Look out and see the glory,
On hill and plain and sky:
Look in and see the light of love
That nevermore shall die!"

L'ENVOI

Window in the Queen's high tower,
This shall be thy magic power!
Shut the darkness and the doubt,
Shut the storm and conflict, out;
Wind and hail and snow and rain
Dash against thee all in vain.
Let in nothing from the night,—
Let in every ray of light.

THE PRISON AND THE ANGEL

SELF is the only prison that can ever bind the soul;
Love is the only angel who can bid the gates unroll;
And when he comes to call thee, arise and follow fast;
His way may lie through darkness, but it leads to light at last.

SANTA CHRISTINA

SAINTS are God's flowers, fragrant souls
That His own hand hath planted,
Not in some far-off heavenly place,
Or solitude enchanted,
But here and there and everywhere, —
In lonely field, or crowded town,
God sees a flower when He looks down.

Some wear the lily's stainless white,
And some the rose of passion,
And some the violet's heavenly blue,
But each in its own fashion,
With silent bloom and soft perfume,
Is praising Him who from above
Beholds each lifted face of love.

One such I knew, — and had the grace
To thank my God for knowing:
The beauty of her quiet life
Was like a rose in blowing, —
So fair and sweet, so all-complete,
And all unconscious as a flower,
That light and fragrance were her dower.

No convent-garden held this rose,
Concealed like secret treasure;
No royal terrace guarded her
For some sole monarch's pleasure.
She made her shrine, this saint of mine,
In a bright home where children played;
And there she wrought and there she prayed.

In sunshine, when the days were glad,
  She had the art of keeping
The clearest rays, to give again
  In days of rain and weeping;
Her blessed heart could still impart
  Some portion of its secret grace,
  And charity shone in her face.

In joy she grew from year to year;
  And sorrow made her sweeter;
And every comfort, still more kind;
  And every loss, completer.
The children came to love her name, —
  "Christina," — 't was a lip's caress;
  And when they called, they seemed to bless.

No more they call, for she is gone.
  The wind passed o'er the flower;
The place that knew and loved her well
  No more, no more shall know her;
They cannot reach her with love's speech,
  And when they say "Christina" now
  'T is like a prayer or like a vow:

A vow to keep her life alive
  In deeds of pure affection,
So that her love shall find through them
  A daily resurrection;
A constant prayer that they may wear
  Some touch of that supernal light
  With which she blossoms in God's sight.

JOY AND DUTY

"JOY is a Duty," — so with golden lore
The Hebrew rabbis taught in days of yore,
And happy human hearts heard in their speech
Almost the highest wisdom man can reach.

But one bright peak still rises far above,
And there the Master stands whose name is Love,
Saying to those whom weary tasks employ:
"Life is divine when Duty is a Joy."

LOVE AND LIGHT

THERE are many kinds of love, as many
kinds of light,
And every kind of love makes a glory in the
night.
There is love that stirs the heart, and love that
gives it rest,
But the love that leads life upward is the
noblest and the best.

PEACE

WITH eager heart and will on fire,
I fought to win my great desire
"Peace shall be mine," I said; but life
Grew bitter in the weary strife.

My soul was tired, and my pride
Was wounded deep: to Heaven I cried,
"God grant me peace or I must die;"
The dumb stars glittered no reply.

Broken at last, I bowed my head,
Forgetting all myself, and said,
"Whatever comes, His will be done;"
And in that moment peace was won.

CHANT OF THE NORTHMEN AT THE THUNDER-OAK

O THOR, the Thunderer,
Mighty and merciless,
Spare us from smiting!
Heave not thy hammer,
Angry, against us;
Plague not thy people!
Take from our treasure
Richest of ransom.
Silver we send thee,
Jewels and javelins,
Goodliest garments;
All our possessions
Priceless we proffer.
Sheep will we slaughter,
Steeds will we sacrifice;
Bright blood shall bathe thee,
O tree of Thunder!
Life-floods shall lave thee,
Strong wood of wonder!
Mighty, have mercy,
Smite us no more,
Spare us and save us,
Spare us, Thor! Thor!

From "The Oak of Geismar."

CHANT OF THE MAGI AT THE FIRE-ALTAR

WE worship the Spirit Divine,
All wisdom and goodness possessing;
Surrounded by Holy Immortals,
The givers of bounty and blessing;
We joy in the works of his hands,
His truth and his glory confessing.

We praise all the things that are pure,
For these are his only creation;
The thoughts that are true, and the words
And the deeds that have won approbation;
These are the effluence of Him,
And for these we would give adoration.

Hear us, O Mazda! Thou livest
In light and in heavenly gladness;
Cleanse us from falsehood, and keep us
From evil and bondage to badness;
Pour out thy light and thy joy
On our darkness and sadness.

Shine on our gardens and fields,
  Shine on our working and weaving;
Shine on the whole race of man,
  Believing and unbelieving;
Shine on us now through the night,
Shine on us now in thy might,
The flame of our prayerful love
  And the song of our worship receiving.

From "The Story of the Other Wise Man."

SONG OF A PILGRIM-SOUL

MARCH on, my soul, nor like a laggard stay!
March swiftly on. Yet err not from the way
Where all the nobly wise of old have trod—
The path of faith made by the sons of God.

Follow the marks that they have set beside
The narrow, cloud-swept track, to be thy guide:
Follow, and honour what the past has gained,
And forward still, that more may be attained.

Something to learn, and something to forget:
Hold fast the good, and seek the better yet:
Press on, and prove the pilgrim-hope of youth,—
That Creeds are milestones on the road to Truth.

A BABE AMONG THE STARS

WHEN I beheld the splendour of the night,
And all the misty myriad of her stars,
Forever swinging on their paths of light,
Far out beyond our system's narrow bars,
I marvelled that the glory of God's birth
Had fallen only on this little earth.

Infinite condescension, that could raise
The least to be most blessed. God can bring
Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings praise.
This late-born infant of the sky shall sing
A music sweeter than her sister spheres;
Incarnate love, while heaven in wonder hears.

TO THE CHILD JESUS

I

THE NATIVITY

COULD every time-worn heart but see Thee once again,
A happy human child, among the homes of men,
The age of doubt would pass, — the vision of Thy face
Would silently restore the childhood of the race.

II

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Thou wayfaring Jesus, a pilgrim and stranger,
Exiled from heaven by love at thy birth,
Exiled again from thy rest in the manger,
A fugitive child 'mid the perils of earth, —
Cheer with thy fellowship all who are weary,
Wandering far from the land that they love;
Guide every heart that is homeless and dreary,
Safe to its home in thy presence above.

THE BARGAIN

WHAT shall I give for thee,
Thou Pearl of greatest price?
For all the treasures I possess
Would not suffice.

I give my store of gold;
It is but earthly dross:
But thou shalt make me rich, beyond
All fear of loss.

Mine honours I resign;
They are but small at best:
Thou like a royal star shalt shine
Upon my breast.

My worldly joys I give,
The flowers with which I played;
Thy beauty, far more heavenly fair,
Shall never fade.

Dear Lord, is that enough?
Nay, not a thousandth part.
Well, then, I have but one thing more:
Take Thou my heart.

THE MASTER'S VOICE

WHEN days are dark and nights are cold,
And all the world seems going wrong;
When fears are fresh, and hopes grow old,
And die because they 've waited long;
When all is sad without, within,
And I am plagued with doubt and sin,
Yet have I comfort, and rejoice
If I can hear the Master's voice.

Come unto Me, thou child distressed;
Come, find a refuge on My breast;
Lay down thy burden, and have rest.

When clouds are thick, and winds are loud,
And angry waters rising fast,
With many leaping waves that crowd
To overwhelm my boat at last;
When all my chance of life seems lost,
Though far astray and tempest-tossed,
Yet have I courage, and rejoice
If I can hear the Master's voice.

Be not afraid; 't is I that stand,
In every danger, near at hand.
The winds are still at My command.

When earthly voices, once so dear,
  Have died in silence, one by one,
Till I am left to mourn them here
  With empty heart, and all alone;
When sorrow from the gates of death
Breathes on my cheek her icy breath;
Yet have I peace, and can rejoice
If I but hear the Master's voice.

A little while; wait patiently.
A little while, and thou shalt be
With thy beloved, and with Me.

BITTER-SWEET

JUST to give up, and trust
All to a Fate unknown,
Plodding along life's road in the dust,
Bounded by walls of stone;
Never to have a heart at peace;
Never to see when care will cease;
Just to be still when sorrows fall—
This is the bitterest lesson of all.

Just to give up, and rest
All on a Love secure,
Out of a world that's hard at the best,
Looking to heaven as sure;
Ever to hope, through cloud and fear,
In darkest night, that the dawn is near;
Just to wait at the Master's feet—
Surely, now, the bitter is sweet.

THE WAY

WHO seeks for heaven alone to save his soul,
May keep the path, but will not reach the goal;
While he who walks in love may wander far,
But God will bring him where the Blessed are.

THE ARROW

LIFE is an arrow — therefore you must know
What mark to aim at, how to use the bow —
Then draw it to the head, and let it go!

THE GREAT RIVER

"In la sua volontade è nostra pace."

O MIGHTY river! strong, eternal Will,
Wherein the streams of human good and ill
Are onward swept, conflicting, to the sea,
The world is safe because it floats in Thee.

MERCY FOR ARMENIA

I

THE TURK'S WAY

STAND back, ye messengers of mercy! Stand
Far off, for I will save my troubled folk
In my own way. So the false Sultan spoke;
And Europe, hearkening to his base command,
Stood still to see him heal his wounded land.
Through blinding snows of winter and through smoke
Of burning towns, she saw him deal the stroke
Of cruel mercy that his hate had planned.
Unto the prisoners and the sick he gave
New tortures, horrible, without a name;
Unto the thirsty, blood to drink; a sword
Unto the hungry; with a robe of shame
He clad the naked, making life abhorred.
He saved by slaughter, and denied a grave.

II

AMERICA'S WAY

But thou, my country, though no fault be thine
  For that red horror far across the sea;
  Though not a tortured wretch can point to thee,
And curse thee for the selfishness supine
Of those great Powers that cowardly combine
  To shield the Turk in his iniquity;
  Yet, since thy hand is innocent and free,
Rise, thou, and show the world the way divine!
Thou canst not break the oppressor's iron rod,
  But thou canst minister to the oppressed;
    Thou canst not loose the captive's heavy chain,
    But thou canst bind his wounds and soothe his pain.
  Armenia calls thee, Empire of the West,
To play the Good Samaritan for God.

THE BUILDERS

AN ACADEMIC ODE

RECITED AT THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH
ANNIVERSARY OF PRINCETON COLLEGE
OCTOBER 21, 1896

THE BUILDERS

I

INTO the dust of the making of man
Spirit was breathed when his life began,
Lifting him up from his low estate,
With masterful passion, the wish to create.
Out of the dust of his making, man
Fashioned his works as the ages ran;
Palace, and fortress, and temple, and tower,
Filling the world with the proof of his power.
The clay wherein God made him
Grew plastic and obeyed him;
The trees, high-arching o'er him,
Fell everywhere before him;
The hills, in silence standing,
Gave up, at his commanding,
Their ancient rock-foundations
To strengthen his creations;
And all the metals hidden
Came forth as they were bidden,
To help his high endeavour,
And build a house to last forever.

II

The monuments of mortals
  Are as the flower of the grass;
Through Time's dim portals
  A voiceless, viewless wind doth pass;
And where it breathes, the brightest blooms
      decay,
The forests bend to earth more deeply day by
      day,
And man's great buildings slowly fade away.
        One after one,
    They pay to that dumb breath
    The tribute of their death,
        And are undone.
    The towers incline to dust,
    The massive girders rust,
    The domes dissolve in air,
    The pillars that upbear
The lofty arches crumble, stone by stone,
While man the builder looks about him in
      despair,
For all his works of pride and power are over-
      thrown.

III

A Voice spake out of the sky:
"Set thy desires more high.
Thy buildings fade away
Because thou buildest clay.
Now make the fabric sure
With stones that shall endure.
Hewn from the spiritual rock,
The immortal towers of the soul
At Time's dissolving touch shall mock,
And stand secure while æons roll."

IV

Well did the wise in heart rejoice
To hear the secret summons of that Voice,
And patiently begin
The builder's work within,—
Houses not made with hands,
Nor founded on the sands.
And thou, Reverèd Mother, at whose call
We come to keep thy joyous festival,
And celebrate,
With fitting state,
The glory of thy labours on the walls of Truth
Through sevenscore years and ten of thine eternal youth,—
A master builder thou,
And on thy shining brow,
Like Cybele, in fadeless light dost wear
A diadem of turrets strong and fair.

V

I see thee standing in a lonely land,
But late and hardly won from solitude,
  Unpopulous and rude,—
On that far western shore I see thee stand,
Like some young goddess from a brighter strand,
While in thine eyes a radiant thought is born,
Enkindling all thy beauty like the morn,
And guiding to thy work a powerful hand.
Sea-like the forest rolled, in waves of green,
And few the lights that glimmered, leagues between.
High in the north, for fourscore years alone,
Fair Harvard's earliest beacon-tower had shone;
Then Yale was lighted, and an answering ray
Flashed from the meadows by New Haven Bay.
But deeper spread the forest, and more dark,
Where first Neshaminy received the spark
Of sacred learning to a frail abode,
And nursed the holy fire until it glowed.
Thine was the courage, thine the larger look,
That raised yon taper from its humble nook;
Thine was the hope, and thine the stronger will,
That built the beacon here on Princeton Hill.
"New light!" men cried, and murmured that it came
From an unsanctioned source with lawless flame;
It shone too free, for still the church and school
Must only shine according to their rule.

But Princeton answered, in her nobler mood,
"God made the light, and all the light is good.
There is no war between the old and new;
The conflict lies between the false and true.
The stars, that high in heaven their courses run,
In glory differ, but their light is one.
The beacons, gleaming o'er the sea of life,
Are rivals but in radiance, not in strife.
Shine on, ye sister-towers, across the night!
I too will build a lasting home for light."

VI

Brave was that word of faith and bravely was it kept;
With never-wearying zeal that faltered not, nor slept,
She toiled to raise her tower, and while she firmly laid
The deep foundation-walls, at all her toil she prayed.
And men who loved the truth because it made them free,
And men who saw the twofold Word of God agree,
Reading the book of nature and the sacred page
By the same inward ray that grows from age to age,
Were built like living stones that beacon to uplift,
And drawing light from heaven gave to the world the gift.
Nor ever, while they searched the secrets of the earth,
Or traced the stream of life through mystery to its birth,
Nor ever, while they taught the lightning-flash to bear
The messages of man in silence through the air,
Fell from that home of light one false, perfidious ray
To blind the trusting heart, or lead the life astray.
But still, while knowledge grew more luminous and broad
It lit the path of faith and showed the way to God.

VII

Yet not for peace alone
  Labour the builders.
Work that in peace has grown
Swiftly is overthrown,
When from the darkening skies
Storm-clouds of wrath arise,
And through the cannons' crash,
War's deadly lightning-flash
  Smites and bewilders.
Ramparts of strength must frown
Round every placid town
  And city splendid;
All that our fathers wrought,
With true prophetic thought,
  Must be defended!

VIII

But who should raise protecting walls for thee,
Thou young, defenceless land of liberty?
Or who could build the fortress strong enough,
Or stretch the mighty bulwark long enough
To hold thy far-extended coast
Against the overweening host
That took the open path across the sea,
And like a tempest poured
Their desolating horde,
To quench thy dawning light in gloom of tyranny?
Yet not unguarded thou wert found
When on thy shore with sullen sound
The blaring trumpets of an unjust king
Proclaimed invasion. From the insulted ground,
In freedom's desperate hour there seemed to spring
Invisible walls for her defence;
Not trembling, like those battlements of stone
That fell in fear when Joshua's horns were blown;
But standing firmer, growing still more dense,
With every new assault of alien insolence,
While cannon roared and flashed and roared again,
In sovereign pride the living rampart rose,
To meet the onset of imperious foes
With a long line of brave, unconquerable men.
This was thy fortress, well-defended land,
And on these walls, the patient, building hand
Of Princeton laboured with the force of ten.

Her sons were foremost in the furious fight;
Her sons were firmest to uphold the right
In council-chambers of the new-born State,
And prove that he who would be free must first be great
Of heart, and high in thought, and strong
In purpose not to do or suffer wrong.
Such were the men, impregnable to fear,
Whose souls were framed and fashioned here;
And when war shook the land with threatening shock,
The men of Princeton stood like muniments of rock.
Nor has the breath of Time
Dissolved that proud array
Of imperturbable strength:
For though the rocks decay,
And all the iron bands
Of earthly strongholds are unloosed at length,
And buried deep in gray oblivion's sands;
The work that heroes' hands
Wrought in the light of freedom's natal day
Shall never fade away,
But lifts itself, sublime,
Into a lucid sphere,
For ever still and clear,
And far above the devastating breath of Time;
Preserving in the memory of the fathers' deed,
A never-failing fortress for their children's need.
There we confirm our hearts to-day; and there we read,
On many a stone, the signature of fame,
The builders' mark, our Alma Mater's name.

IX

Bear with us then a moment, if we turn
From all the present splendours of this place—
The lofty towers that like a dream have grown
Where once old Nassau Hall stood all alone—
Back to that ancient time, with hearts that burn
In filial reverence and pride, to trace
    The glory of our mother's best degree,
    In that "high son of Liberty,"
    Who like a granite block,
    Riven from Scotland's rock,
Stood loyal here to keep Columbia free.
Born far away beyond the ocean's roar,
He found his fatherland upon this shore;
And every drop of ardent blood that ran
Through his great heart, was true American.
He held no weak allegiance to a distant throne,
But made his new-found country's cause his own.
    In peril and distress,
    In toil and weariness,
    When darkness overcast her
    With shadows of disaster,
    And voices of confusion
    Proclaimed her hope delusion,
    Robed in his preacher's gown,
    He dared the danger down;
Like some old prophet chanting an inspired rune
Through freedom's councils rang the voice of Witherspoon.

And thou, my country, write it on thy heart,
Thy sons are they who nobly take thy part;
Who dedicates his manhood at thy shrine,
Wherever born, is born a son of thine;
Foreign in name, but not in soul, they come
To find in thee their long-desired home;
Lovers of liberty and haters of disorder,
They shall be built in strength along thy border.
Ah, dream not that thy future foes
Will all be foreign-born!
Turn thy clear look of scorn
Upon the children who oppose
Their passions wild and policies of shame
To wreck the righteous splendour of thy name.
Untaught and overconfident they rise,
With folly on their lips and envy in their eyes:
Strong to destroy, but powerless to create,
And ignorant of all that made our fathers great,
Their hands would take away thy golden crown,
And shake the pillars of thy freedom down
In Anarchy's ocean, dark and desolate.
O should that storm descend,
What fortress shall defend
The land our fathers wrought for,
The liberties they fought for?
What bulwark shall secure
Her shrines of law, and keep her founts of justice pure?
Then, ah then,
As in the olden days,
The builders must upraise
A rampart of indomitable men.

Once again,
Dear Mother, if thy heart and hand be true,
There will be building work for thee to do;
Yea, more than once again,
Thou shalt win lasting praise,
And never-dying honour shall be thine,
For setting many stones in that illustrious line,
To stand unshaken in the swirling strife,
And guard their country's honour as her life.

X

Softly, my harp, and let me lay the touch
Of silence on these rudely clanging strings;
    For he who sings
Even of noble conflicts overmuch,
Loses the inward sense of better things;
    And he who makes a boast
Of knowledge, darkens that which counts the most, —
The insight of a wise humility
That reverently adores what none can see.
    The glory of our life below
Comes not from what we do, or what we know,
But dwells forevermore in what we are.
There is an architecture grander far
Than all the fortresses of war,
More inextinguishably bright
Than learning's lonely towers of light.
Framing its walls of faith and hope and love
In deathless souls of men, it lifts above
The frailty of our earthly home
    An everlasting dome;
The sanctuary of the human host,
The living temple of the Holy Ghost.

XI

If music led the builders long ago,
When Arthur planned the halls of Camelot,
And made the mystic city swiftly grow,
Like some strange flower in that forsaken spot;
What sweeter music shall we bring,
To weave a harmony divine
Of prayer and holy thought
Into the labours of this loftier shrine,
This consecrated hill,
Where through so many a year
Our Mother's faithful hand hath wrought,
With toil serene and still,
And heavenly hope, to rear
The eternal dwelling of the Only King?
Here let no martial trumpets blow,
Nor instruments of pride proclaim
The loud exultant notes of fame!
But let the chords be clear and low,
And let the anthem deeper grow,
And let it move more solemnly and slow,
Like that which came
From angels' lips when first they hymned their Maker's name;
For only such an ode
Can seal the harmony
Of that deep masonry
Wherein the soul of man is framed for God's abode.

XII

O Thou whose boundless love bestows
  The joy of life, the hope of Heaven;
Thou whose unchartered mercy flows
  O'er all the blessings Thou hast given;
Thou by whose light alone we see;
Thou by whose truth our souls set free
Are made imperishably strong;
Hear Thou the solemn music of our song.

Grant us the knowledge that we need
  To solve the questions of the mind;
Light Thou our candle while we read,
  And keep our hearts from going blind;
Enlarge our vision to behold
The wonders Thou hast wrought of old;
Reveal thyself in every law,
And gild the towers of truth with holy awe.

Be Thou our strength when war's wild gust
  Rages around us, loud and fierce;
Confirm our souls and let our trust
  Be like a wall that none can pierce;
Give us the courage that prevails,
The steady faith that never fails,
Help us to stand in every fight
Firm as a fortress to defend the right.

O God, make of us what Thou wilt;
  Guide Thou the labour of our hand;
Let all our work be surely built
  As Thou, the architect, hast planned;
But whatsoe'er thy power shall make
Of these frail lives, do not forsake
Thy dwelling. Let thy presence rest
For ever in the temple of our breast.

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